



Arab Reform Initiative

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ARI Publishes Winner of First Student Essay Contest

→ Arab Reform Initiative



The 2020 Student Essay Contest

How can diasporas support democratic transitions in the Arab world?





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The Arab Reform Initiative, a leading regional think tank focusing on a home-grown agenda for democratic change and social justice, announced today the winner of its first Student Essay Contest Award for the paper “Diasporas: A Global and Vibrant Force for Arab Democratization”.

The winner, a French student with Levantine background, preferred not to publicly disclose his real name and to go by the pseudonym Amine al-Sharif. He informed the Arab Reform Initiative of his real identity, and his student credentials were verified.

The annual Student Essay Contest is meant to encourage students to think critically and actively engage with issues that are at the heart of the challenges and opportunities facing the Middle East and North Africa region today. In this year’s inaugural edition, participants were asked to examine how diaspora as a political actor can support the transition towards more democratic societies in MENA. As part of the Award, the winning essay is published in English and Arabic on the Arab Reform Initiative’s website and receives a prize of USD500.

“We are thrilled by the interesting papers submitted by students on how diasporas can support transitions in their countries of origin, despite the difficulties that many students faced because of Covid-19. Congratulations to the winner for a very thoughtful and well-argued paper, and many thanks to all those who took the time and effort to participate”, said Nadim Houry, Executive Director of the Arab Reform Initiative.

The 2020 Student Essay Contest included submissions from students registered in different universities in MENA, Europe, the USA, and Nigeria. Essays were judged on the strength and relevance of their argumentation by a panel of six members of ARI’s researchers and fellows who come from across the region.

"Winning is a true honour for me considering ARI’s standing and my personal belonging to the Arab diaspora and genuine concern for the political future of the Arab world. I’m very grateful to ARI both for organizing such an interesting contest and for publishing my op-ed. I can now only hope that it will have a positive impact, by spreading the key idea that diasporas truly are a global and vibrant force for Arab democratization”, said Amine al-Sharif



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The winner just graduated with a Masters' in International Security from Sciences Po., Paris. He is interested in issues related to regional conflicts, development and culture and has had the opportunity to work on these topics at the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Armed Forces, as well as a consultant in the Gulf. Amine is also engaged with several civil society organizations, including efforts to promote Middle Eastern heritage.



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About the author



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The Arab Reform Initiative is the leading independent Arab think tank working with expert partners in the Middle East and North Africa and beyond to articulate a home-grown agenda for democratic change. It conducts research and policy analysis and provides a platform for inspirational voices based on the principles of diversity, impartiality and social justice.

- We produce original research informed by local experiences and partner with institutions to achieve impact across the Arab world and globally
- We empower individuals and institutions to develop their own concept of policy solutions
- We mobilize stakeholders to build coalitions for positive change

Our aim is to see vibrant democratic societies emerge and grow in the region.

Founded in 2005, the Arab Reform Initiative is governed by a Plenary of its members and an Executive Committee.

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